



PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS IN REMARKABLE TIMES:

Tracking Change through 24 Years of Houston Surveys

[The “DOE National Workshop on State Energy Codes.”]

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29 June 2005



THE HOUSTON AREA SURVEY (1982–2005):



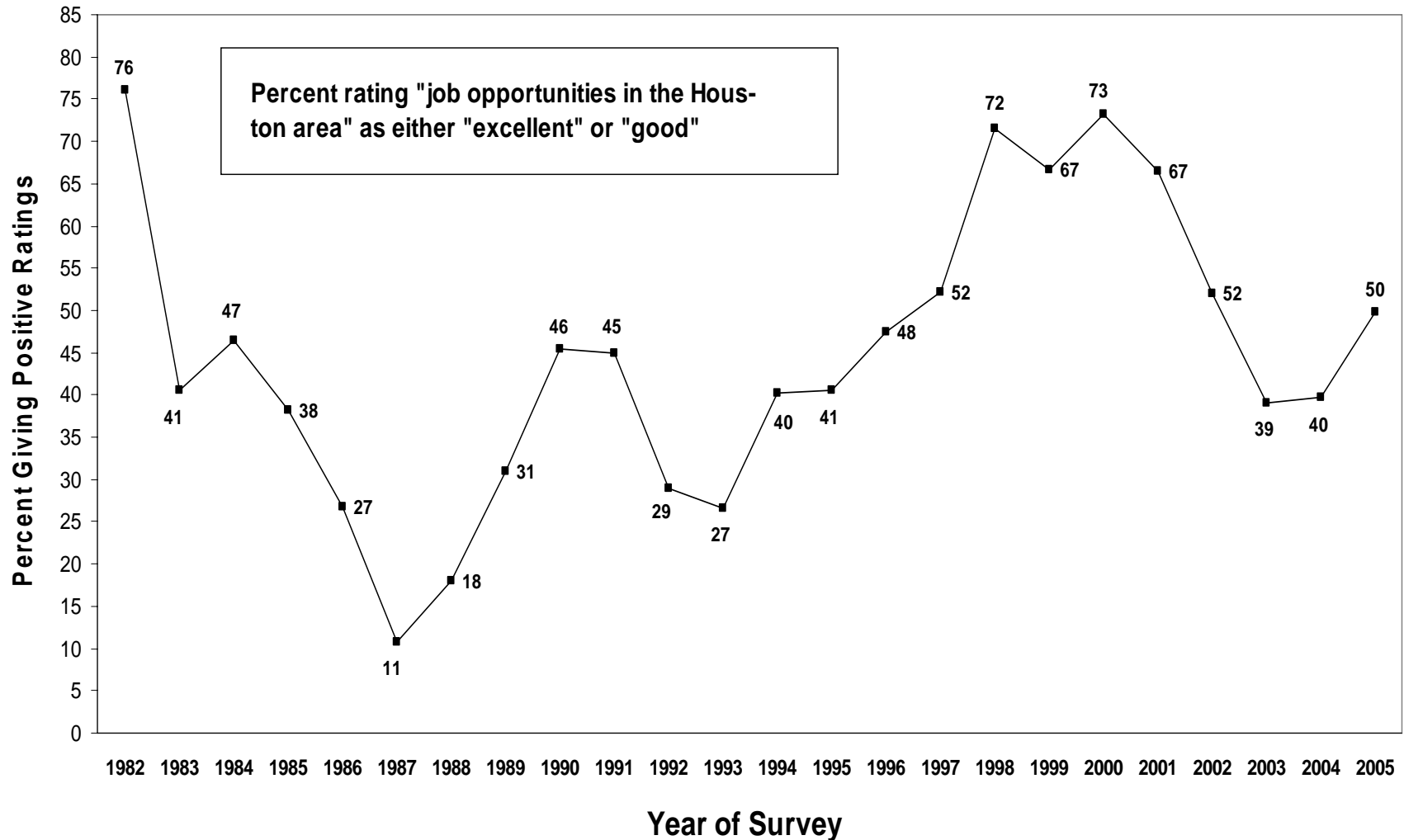
- Supported by a consortium of local foundations, corporations, and individuals, annual random-digit-dialed phone interviews have been conducted, in English and Spanish, with 24 successive representative samples of Harris County residents.
- No other city in the nation has been the focus of a long-term study of this scope, and none more clearly exemplifies the remarkable ongoing transformations of urban America.
- In 13 of the past 15 years, the surveys were expanded to reach at least 450 Anglos, 450 Blacks, and 450 Hispanics.
- In 1995 and 2002, the research included large representative samples from Houston's entire Asian population, the only such surveys in the country.



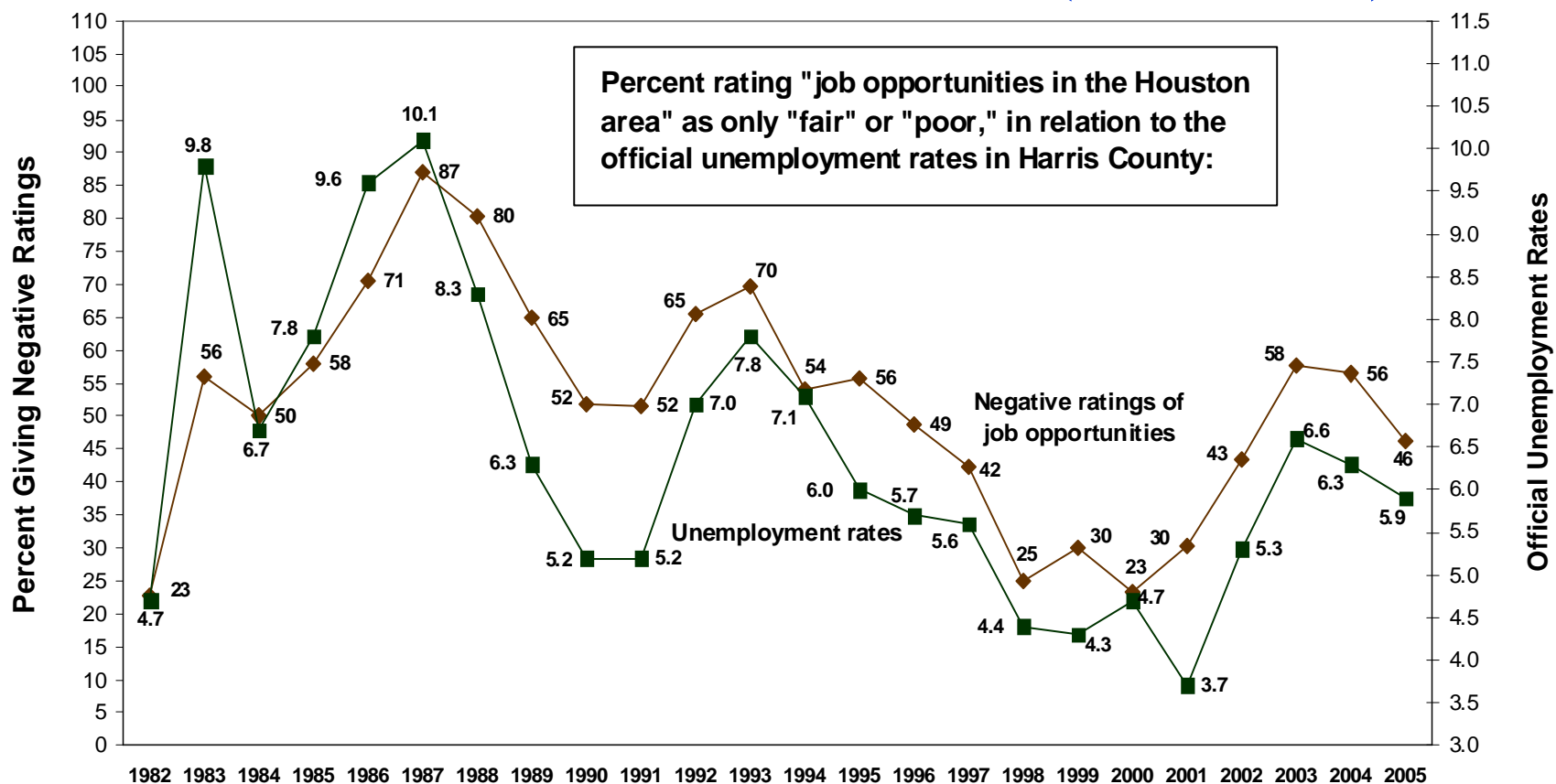
MEASURING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS IN A PERIOD OF REMARKABLE CHANGE:

- In May 1982, two months after the first survey in this series, Houston's oil boom suddenly collapsed.
- The region recovered from the recession of the 1980s to find itself at the center of the most significant transformations of our time.
- By the 1990s, Houston was fully in the midst of . . .
 - A restructured economy, and
 - A demographic revolution.

POSITIVE RATINGS OF LOCAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES (HAS, 1982-2005)



RATINGS OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN RELATION TO HARRIS COUNTY'S OFFI- CIAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (1982-2005)



Source for unemployment: The Texas Workforce Commission



THE RESTRUCTURED ECONOMY:

- The “resource economy” of the Industrial Age has now receded into history.
- The “blue collar” path to financial security has largely disappeared.
- Almost all the good jobs today require high levels of technical skills and educational credentials.
- In 2004, 75% *disagreed* that, “A high school education is enough to get a good job.” And in 2005, 64% *agreed* that, “There are very few good jobs in today’s economy for people without a college education.”
- From now on, “What you earn depends on what you have learned.”

RESULT #1: AN “HOURGLASS” ECONOMY:

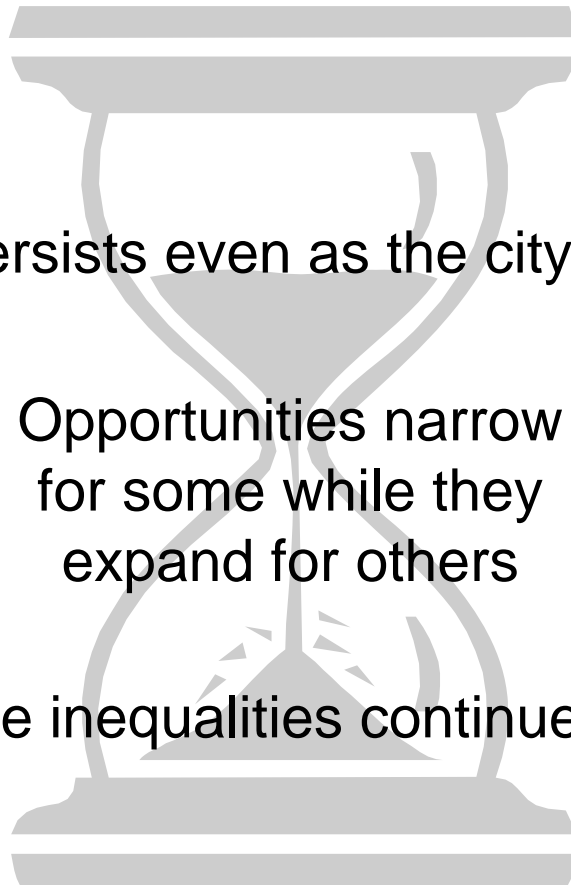


In the new knowledge-based, two-tiered economy . . .

Poverty persists even as the city grows richer

Opportunities narrow
for some while they
expand for others

Income inequalities continue to widen





RESULT #2: THE NEW IMPORTANCE OF “QUALITY-OF-PLACE” ISSUES.

- The source of wealth today has less to do with control over natural resources and more to do with human resources.
- A city's economic success will increasingly depend upon its ability to nurture, attract, and retain skilled and creative “knowledge workers” and high-tech companies.
- Talented individuals and leading corporations are freer than ever before to choose where they would like to live.
- As a result, quality-of-life issues are now among the most significant determinants of a city's prosperity in the new economy.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE:



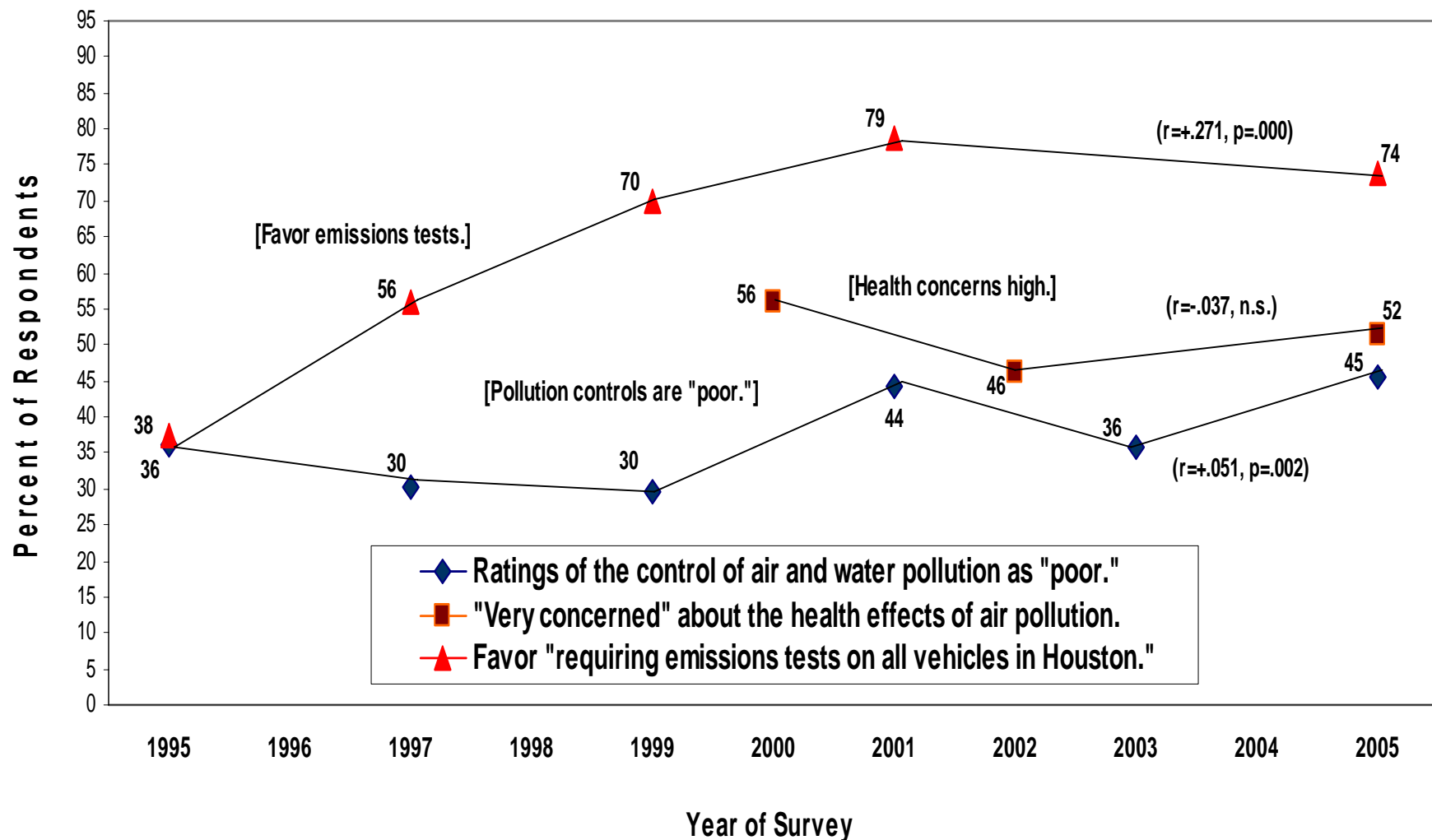
Houston's prosperity in the new economy will depend, to an important degree, on the city's ability to develop into a more environmentally and aesthetically appealing urban destination.

This means significant and sustained improvements in . . .

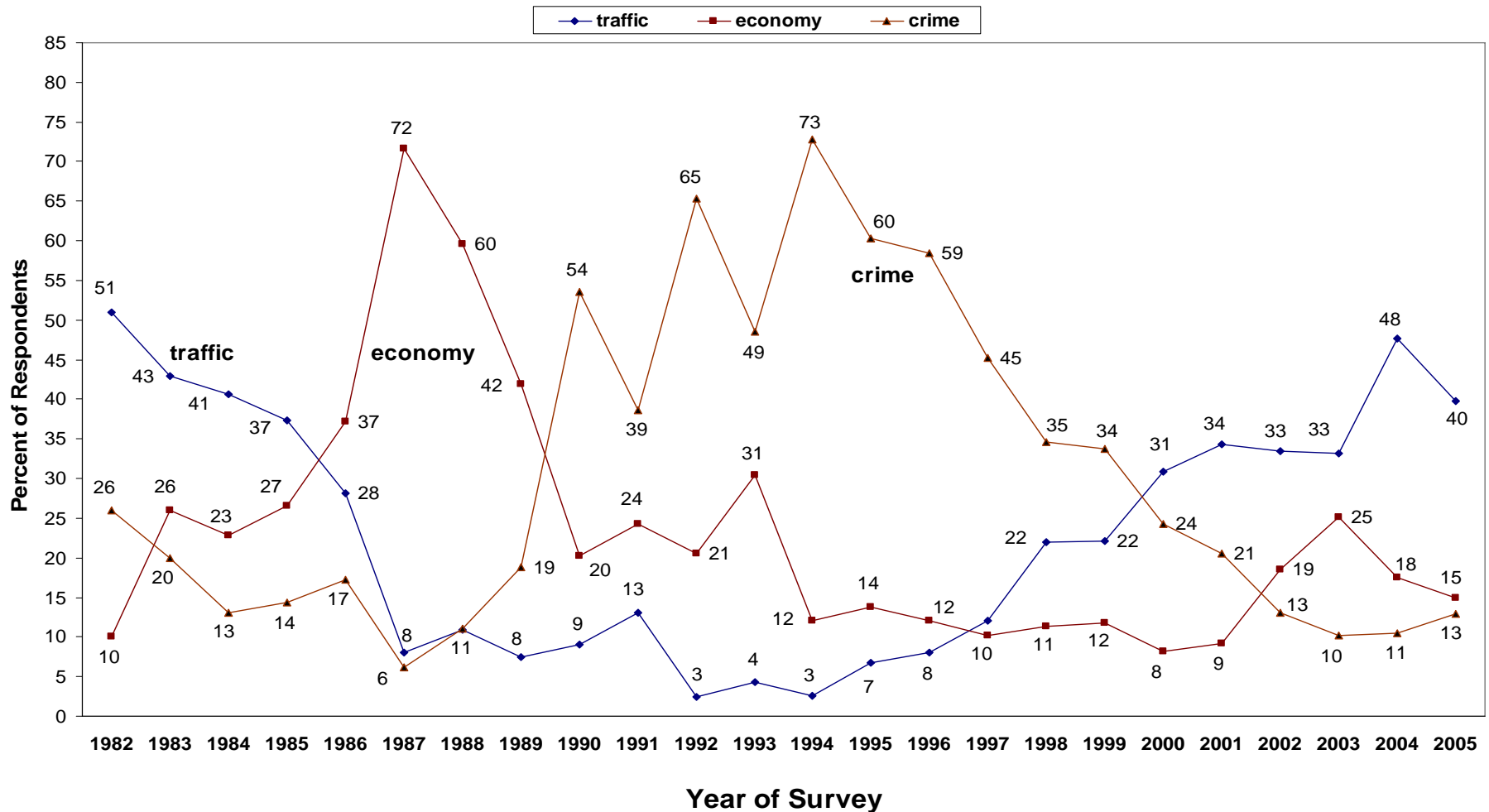
- Mobility and traffic congestion
- The revitalization and preservation of downtown areas
- The quality of air and water
- The venues for sports, art, and culture
- The abundance of parks, trees, and bayous
- The richness of hiking, boating, and birding areas

The public's support for new initiatives along these lines has grown significantly in recent years . . .

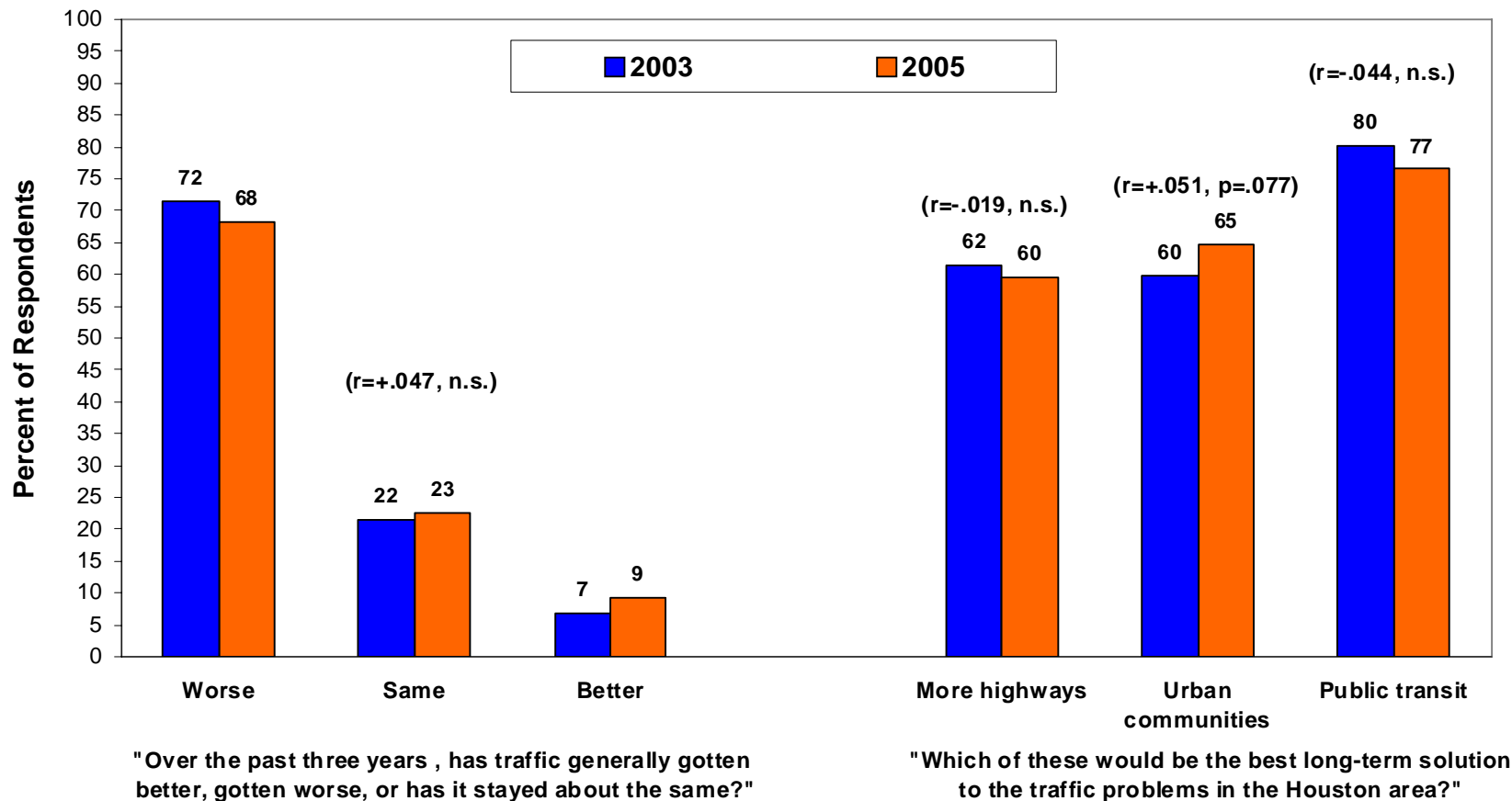
MEASURES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (HAS, 1995-2005)



“WHAT’S THE BIGGEST PROBLEM FACING PEOPLE IN HOUSTON TODAY?” (1982-2005)

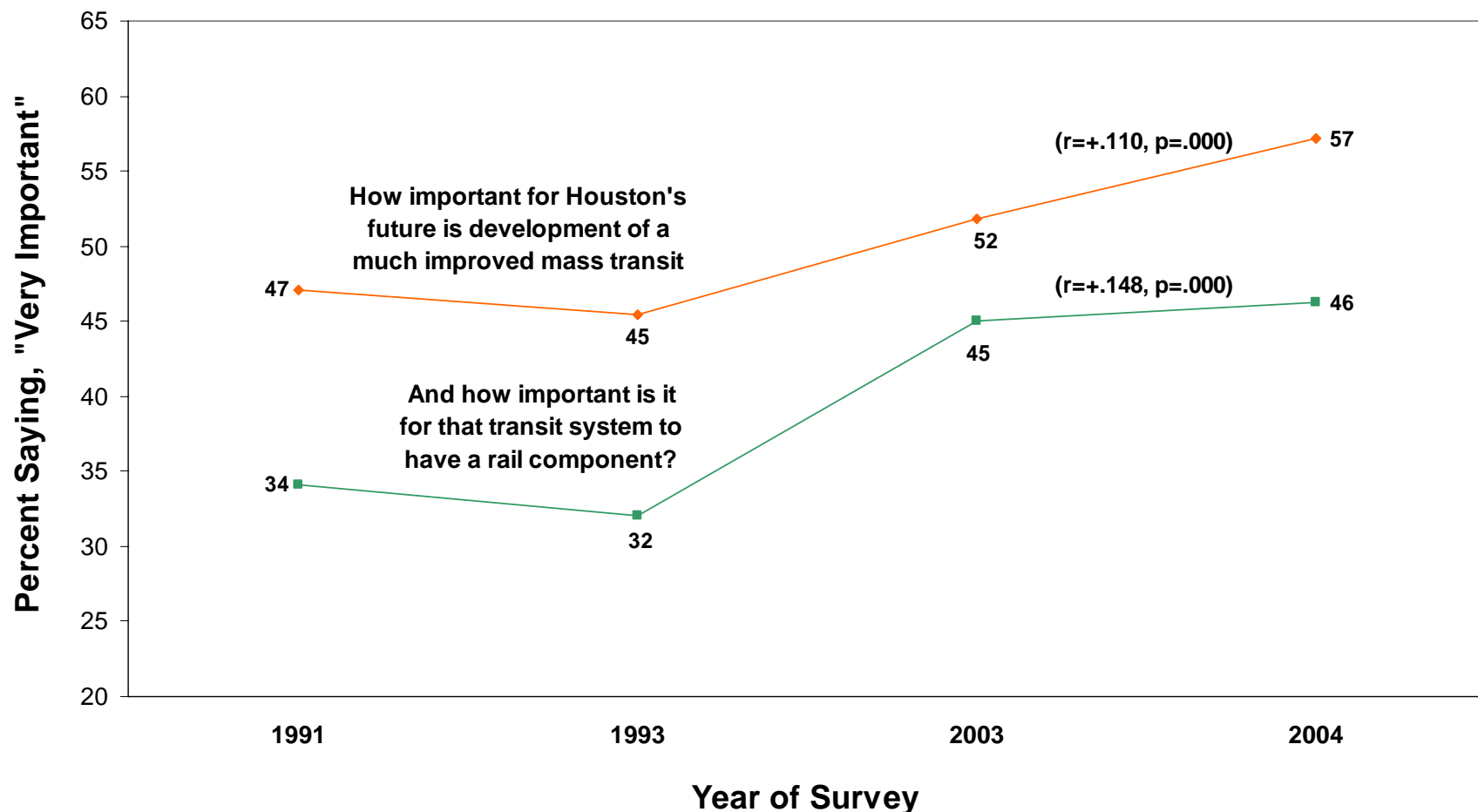


ASSESSMENTS OF TRAFFIC IN THE HOUSTON AREA, AND OF SOME POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS (2003-2005)

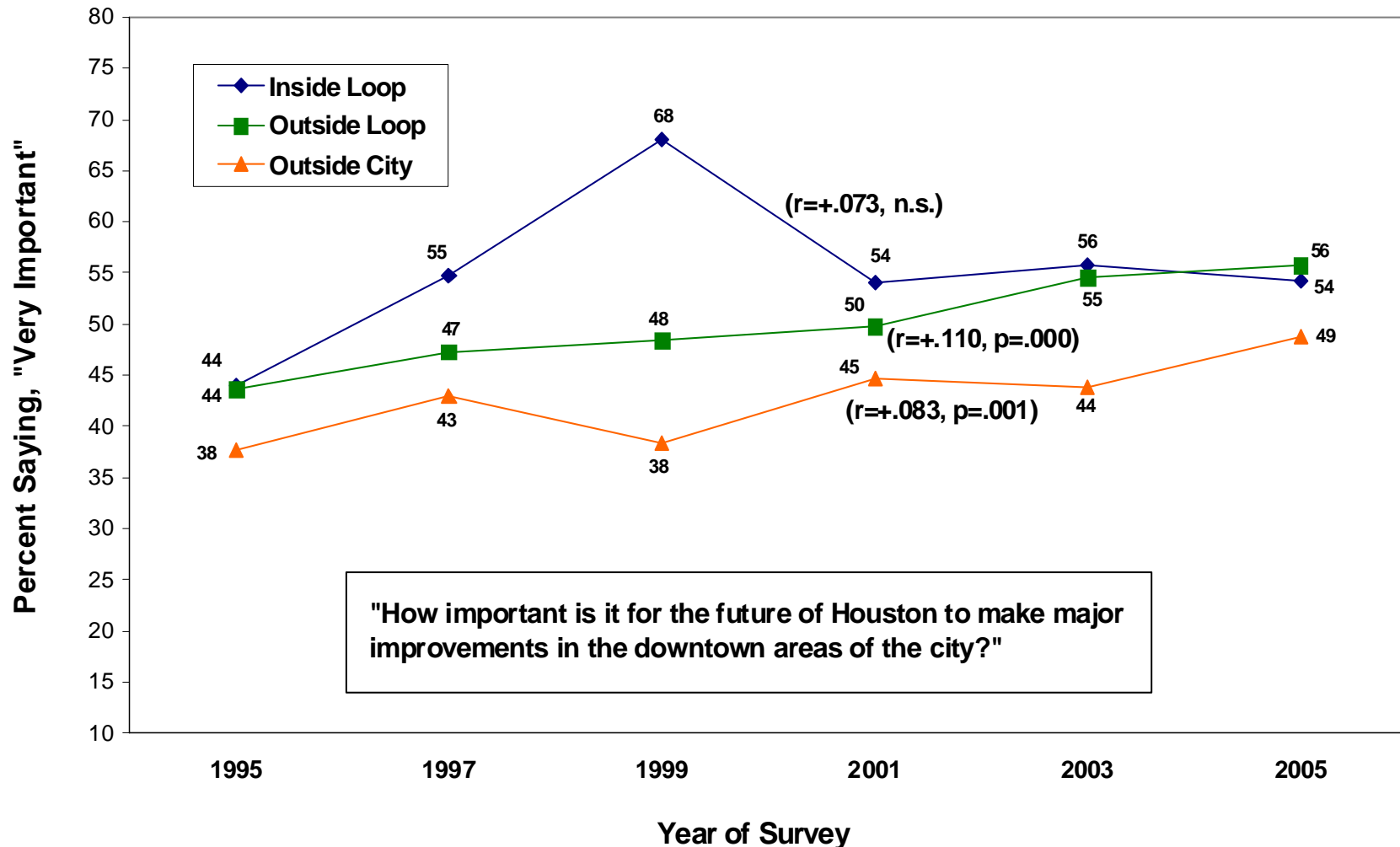




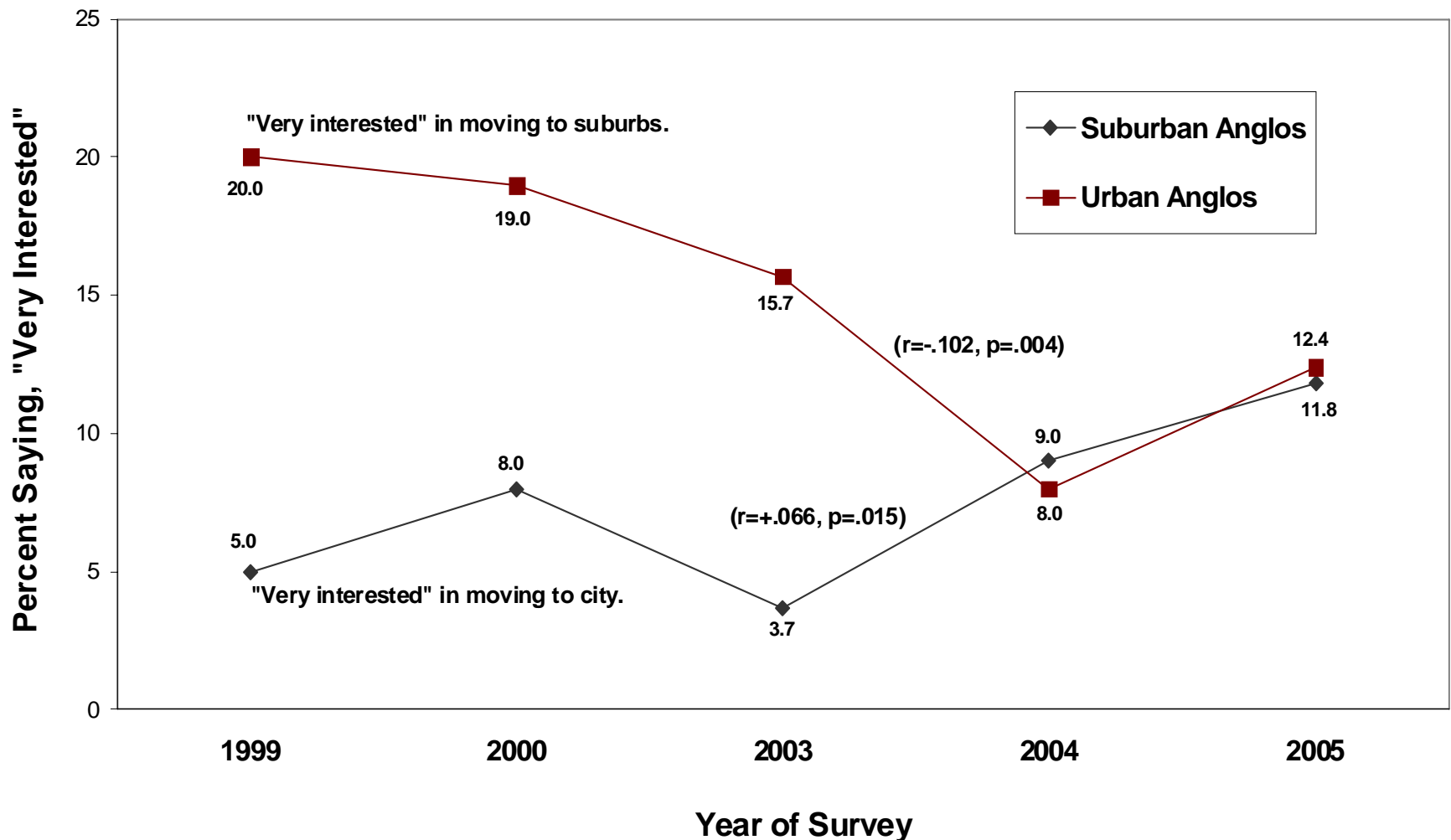
IMPORTANCE OF MUCH IMPROVED MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM, AND OF THAT SYSTEM HAVING A RAIL COMPONENT (1991-2004)



IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (1995-05)



INTEREST AMONG ANGLOS IN MOVING FROM THE SUBURBS TO THE CITY AND FROM THE CITY TO SUBURBS (1999-2005)

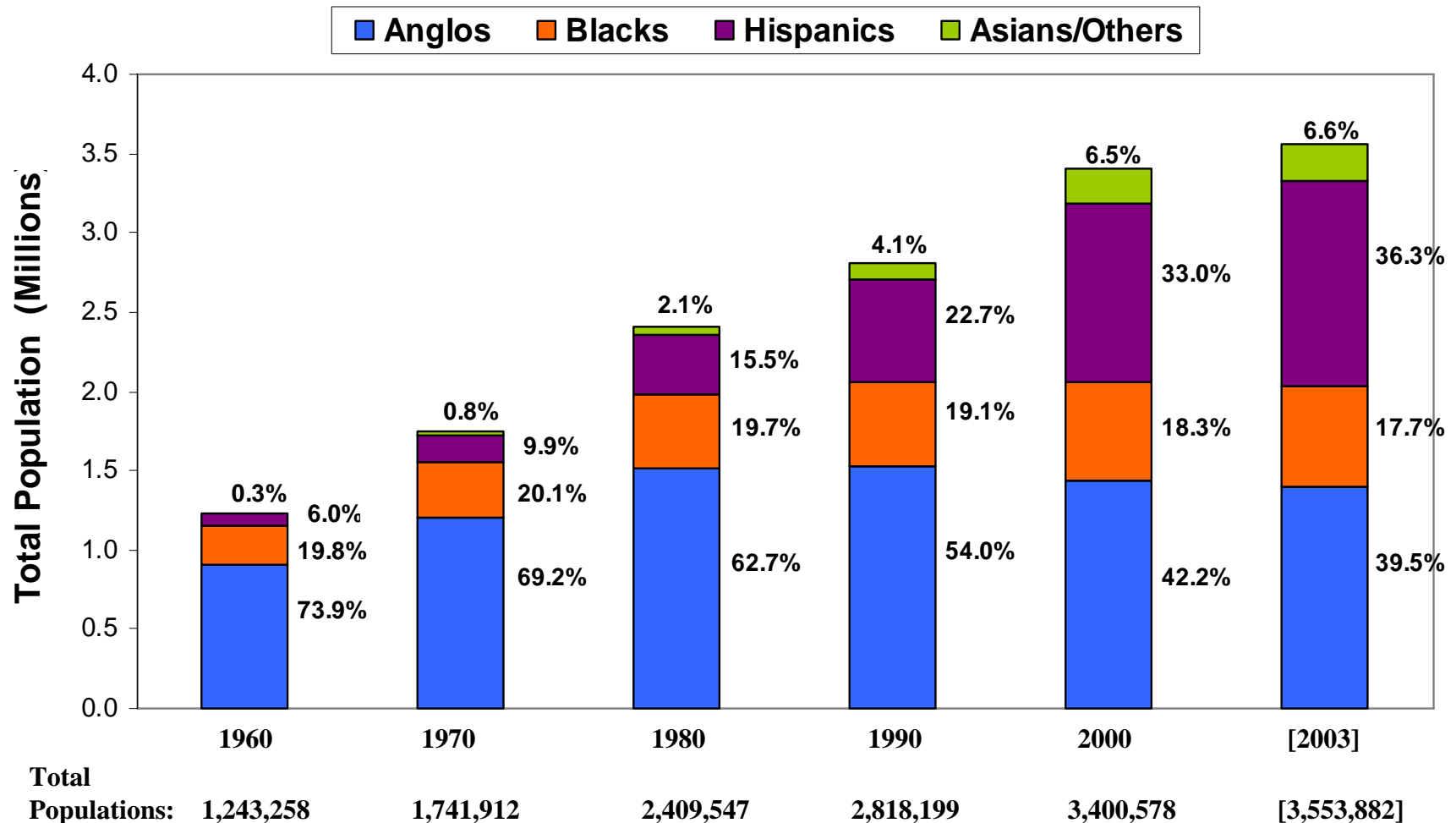


THE DEMOGRAPHIC REVOLUTION:



- At the same time, major immigration streams have transformed the composition of the Houston population.
- Throughout all of its history . . .
 - Houston was essentially a bi-racial Southern city,
 - Dominated and controlled, in a taken-for-granted way, by white men.
- Today . . .
 - This is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse metropolitan areas in the country.
 - All of Houston's ethnic communities are now "minorities."

THE U.S. CENSUS FIGURES FOR HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS (1960-2003)

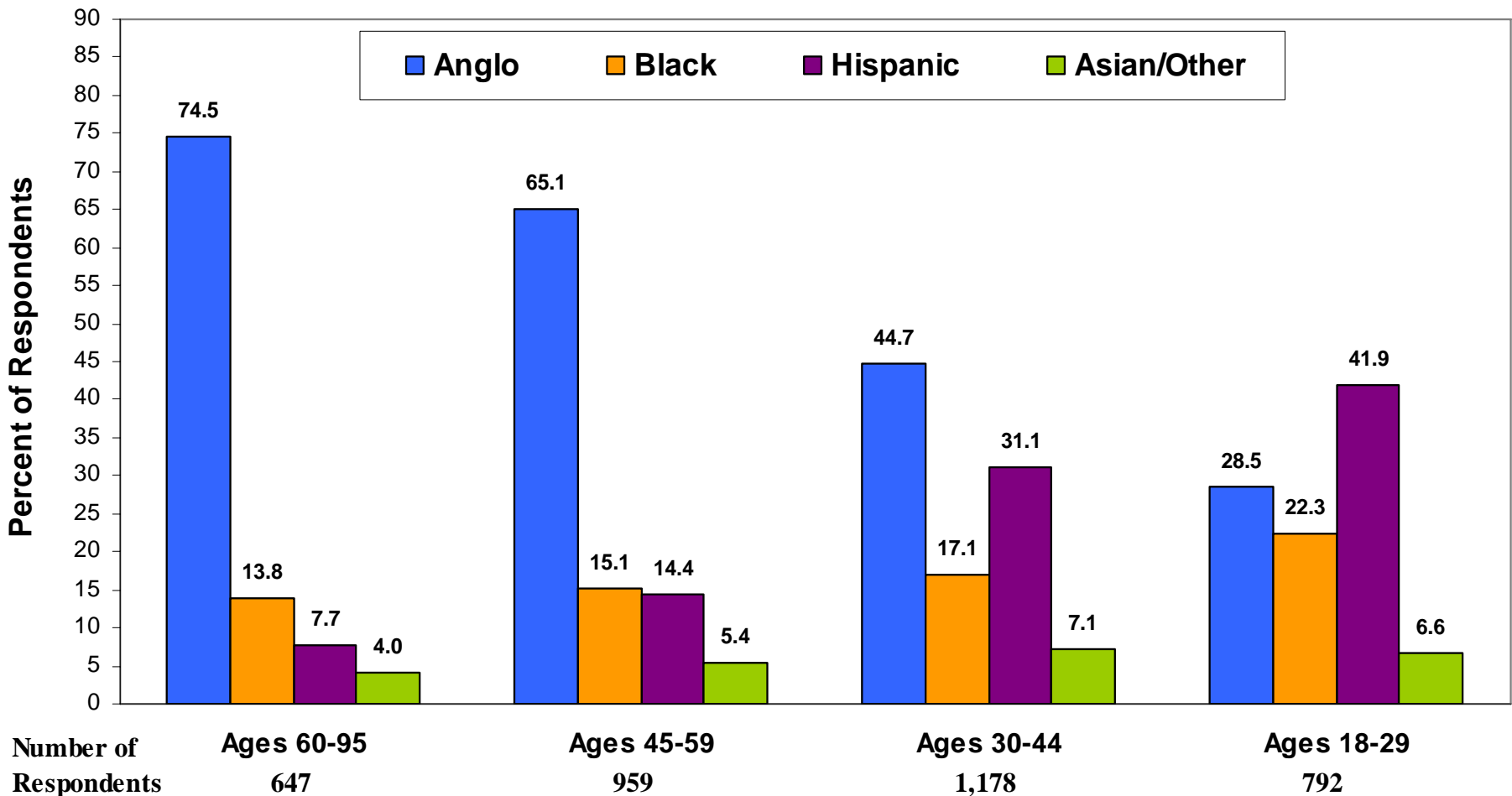


INTERACTIONS OF ETHNICITY AND AGE:



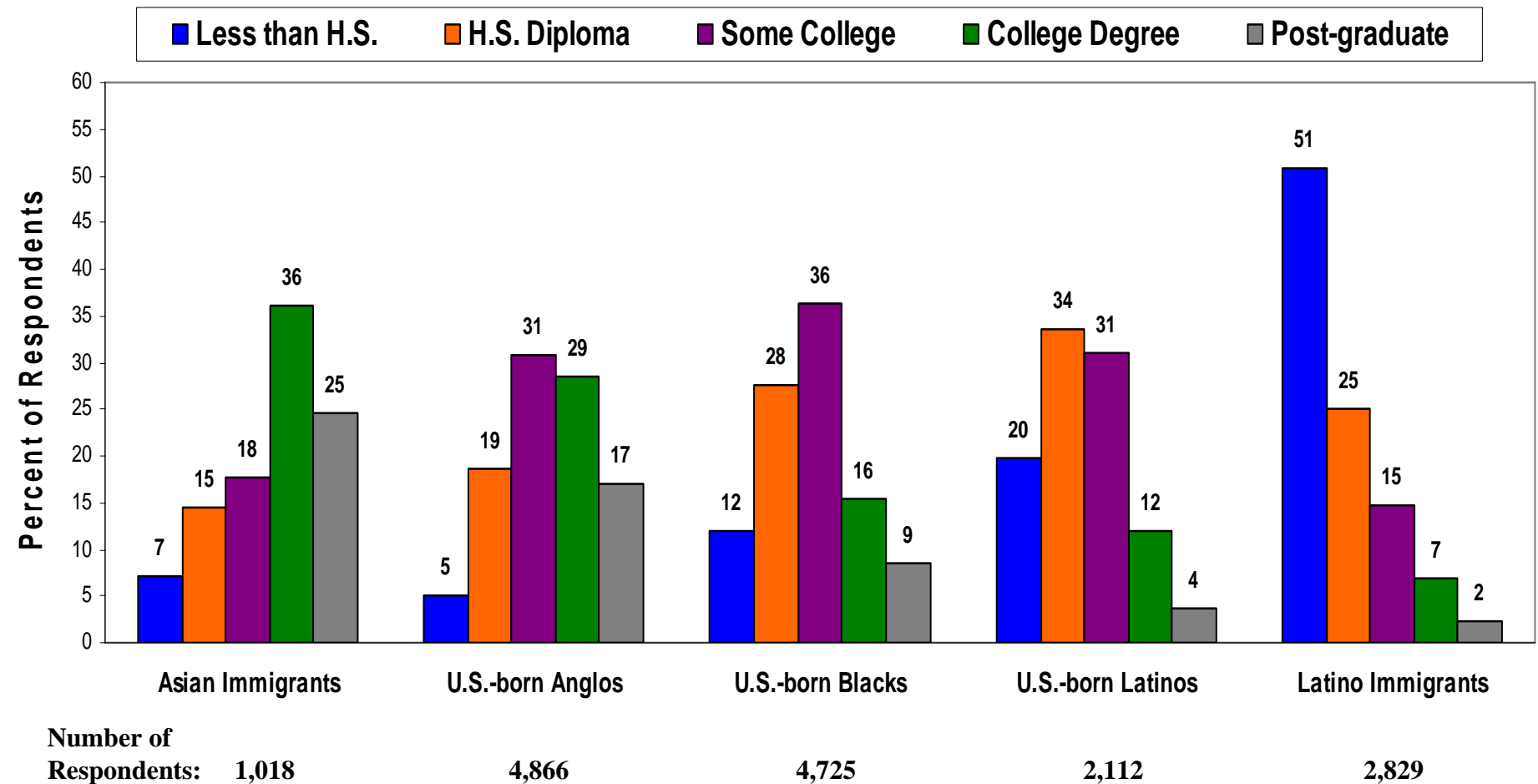
- Two ongoing revolutions: The “aging” and the “colorizing,” a.k.a. the “graying” and the “browning,” of America.
- 76 million American babies (primarily Anglos) were born between 1946 and 1964, now aged 41 to 59.
- The population of Americans over the age of 65 will almost double in size during the next quarter century.
- They will be replaced by the younger Americans, who are disproportionately non-Anglo and less privileged.
- The “aging of America” is thus as much a division along ethnic lines as it is along generational lines.

PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS IN FOUR AGE GROUPS WHO ARE ANGLO, BLACK, HISPANIC, AND ASIAN OR OTHER (2000-2005)





LEVELS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN FIVE COMMUNITIES (HAS, 1994-2005)





CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

- Through most of the last century, this Anglo-dominated, biracial city was riding the oil boom to continual prosperity. The “resource economy” has now receded into history, along with the “blue collar” path to financial security.
- Houston’s success in the new “knowledge economy” will require a far more educated work force, as well as the “quality of place” needed to attract and retain the nation’s most innovative companies and talented individuals.
- The new economic realities, reinforced by public attitudes, have created a compelling “business case” for the importance of environmental protection and other quality-of-life issues, both in Houston and across the state of Texas.



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